



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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SECRET/NOFORN/NO CONTRACT

TO: P - Mr. Newsom  
FROM: NEA - William R. Crawford

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| DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR   |                        |
| REVIEWED BY <i>W. R. Crawford</i>  | DATE <i>Oct 28 '81</i> |
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Soviet-Afghan Relations: Is Moscow's  
Patience Wearing Thin?

*Slack 840028*

There have been several recent hints that all may not be well between the Taraki regime and Moscow. A May 22 cable from Embassy Kabul records a Soviet Embassy officer's frustration with a politically inexperienced DRA. The same official observed that "at this time" there is no apparent alternative leadership and indicated Soviet support for the DRA would continue "almost to the end."

In a possibly revealing May 22 commentary, however, Pravda omitted any references to support for the regime of the Afghan people while reiterating charges of Pakistani, Chinese and U.S. interference in Afghanistan's affairs. Other reports suggest that the Soviets are already moving forward with plans to engineer replacement of the present Khalqi leadership of the DRA, perhaps with the exiled Parchamist leaders including former Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Karmal, now believed to be hiding in Europe.

Possible confirmation of this trend in Soviet-Afghan relations comes from reports that the Afghans themselves are disappointed with the performance of the USSR. According to one source,

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*Classified*

## TRANSCRIPTION - ORIGINAL FOLLOWS

Prime Minister Amin has been seeing less of Soviet Ambassador Puzanov and some Soviet advisers have been withdrawn from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Earlier reports have revealed that the DRA is having difficulty meeting its development assistance requirements and had expected a more generous response from the Soviets. Perhaps even President Taraki's urging to our Charge to help remove any "misunderstanding" in U.S.-Afghan relations may/be seen in this light.

It is difficult to assess the validity of these reports except to note that they all point in the direction of some disenchantment between Afghanistan and the USSR. The Soviets may be annoyed at the haphazard and precipitous manner in which the DRA has plunged ahead with its reform programs without building necessary popular support or the institutional framework needed for them to succeed. Moscow has become fully identified with this bungling, is reaping a harvest of casualties among its advisory personnel serving in Afghanistan, and is facing a drastic rise in hostility among the traditionally xenophobic Afghan people. The Soviets are probably also concerned by the effect their involvement in Afghanistan is having on their image in the Moslem and the Third Worlds. We doubt that the Soviets will turn loose of the Afghan tar baby, however, although they may try to engineer some changes at the top.

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